The Further I Go, The Closer I Get

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The Further I Go, The Closer I Get

by Metaphysicalash

Summary

Neither Will nor Hannibal expected the former to come back to therapy, but there Will was, back in that familiar office with Hannibal after their recent conflicts. After Hannibal's manipulation and Will pointing a gun at him. It was an odd connection. One Will didn't think would get any stronger. He thought his anger towards Hannibal would never subside. He thought he'd never have any feelings for Hannibal, but his jealousy at seeing Hannibal and Alana together spoke differently.

Amidst a serial killer case, Will tries to make sense of his emotions, and deal with the uncomfortable love triangle between him, Hannibal, and Alana. He can't deny the truth. He and Hannibal can't stay away from each other for too long. The question is whether their feelings would be enough to bring them closer together, or Will's hostility would get in the way.

Notes

This fic has been in my laptop for a month now, and I finally got around to posting it. I wanted to write a love triangle thing between Alana, Hannibal, and Will for quite a long time :)

This fic is kinda a season 2 AU of sorts, with a bit of Mizumono in the end, but it's written completely different. I didn't include Abigail because it didn't fit with the plot. As usual, this fic hasn't been beta'd so any errors/inconsistencies are mine. I don't know how this is 🙈

Content warning - There'll be violence, since it's a Hannibal fic. Maybe some brief mentions of mental/physical sickness. If anymore tags are required, let me know :)

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1

Considering the chaos that had happened, with Will finding out Hannibal was the Chesapeake Ripper, being accused himself of being the Ripper and imprisoned, then being released, and pointing an unloaded gun to Hannibal's head, the last thing Hannibal expected was for Will to return and resume his therapy. It was beyond him. Even his complex labyrinth of a mind couldn't have predicted this. By then, he and Alana had a thing. Or… at least it looked that way. Hannibal figured Will was never coming back, so to see him sitting there in that leather sofa again as his patient surprised him. Perhaps a tinge of disappointment came with it too because their friendship was no longer what it was. The man he had expressed his affections to, in implicit and morbid ways, did not reciprocate his feelings.

Even now, seated across from him, Hannibal could see the animosity glinting in Will's darkened blue eyes. At least, one thing was for sure—Lecter could no longer lie to him. He probably never anticipated things would turn out this way. Never thought someone as sharp and intelligent as Will Graham would show up in his life and discover him for what he really was when everyone else failed to.

They began their sessions as they usually did, discussing cases and criminals. Occasionally, Hannibal's mind would travel back to how it was before things went south, back when Will didn't know anything about who the Ripper was. Those were, in their own way, 'the good times'.

Though he believed it so, and even told Will their friendship no longer existed, he still wondered deep down if the man felt something. Anything.

Will's hatred shouldn't be bothering him. *So why was it?*

Why did it prick him like the spines of a cactus?

Maybe because a part of him still wanted him by his side. It didn't seem like that would happen now. He thought he knew Will at this point. He thought he'd never feel as much for him as he did before, but *damn*, was he so wrong.

When Will pulled the trigger on Clark Ingram—the social worker slash serial killer—despite Hannibal's attempt to convince him not to, it took Hannibal by a pleasant surprise. Will's unpredictability, his defiance, fascinated him to no end. It pulled his heart towards him like a magnet once again. It was crazy no matter what Will did, Hannibal still felt those unfathomable feelings for him.

He couldn't show that anymore, though. Not after Will pointed a gun at him. It stung him somewhat, so he kept his guard up.

He couldn't let him get the better of him this time.

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Will couldn't fully understand it either. Sure, he wanted to resume his therapy, maybe to get back at his therapist. An excuse to prove he was the Ripper.

Maybe.

He figured that was the reason at first, and he probably decided so, but it wasn't the whole reason. He thought he knew why he came back, but after some weeks of attending sessions, those reasons and explanations began to blur, turn into a Bokeh of sorts. He'd sit through every appointment, explaining the latest serial killer cases to Hannibal, and as always, nobody knew him better than him. Nobody could speak to him on his level, or decipher his thoughts the way the doctor did. No matter how much he wanted to hold onto his hatred, from all the lies Lecter told him, the manipulations, he couldn't deny there wasn't a single soul in this world who understood him better than him.

At that moment when Hannibal stopped him from shooting Clark Ingram, and held his face, telling him how intrigued he was by his unpredictability, something sparked inside Will's chest. He couldn't pay attention to the anger he had felt then. It faded almost instantly when Hannibal touched him so intimately.

He hated it. He hated how the doctor could influence his emotions. He hated how he could get to his head.

Or did he? Did he truly hate it?

Frustrating might be a better word. Frustrating because Will had no clue how to articulate his feelings, let alone know what to do with them.

There he was, one fine evening, discussing his newest case as usual. A serial killer who murders victims, chops off their limbs, steals something that belongs to them—a necklace, bracelet, etc.—and then sends those items along with a part of their limb to their loved ones in a package. He left no traces after his deeds. His victims were usually wealthy people.

"Clearly, the packages he sends to the families of the victims are a message," Will said.

"What kind of message do you think he's trying to convey?" Hannibal said, sitting cross-legged.

Will drew in a deep breath and exhaled from his nose slowly. "He's picking off the wealthy, so if I had to guess, maybe he had been wronged in some way. He's not very clean with the butchering. The limbs of the bodies look like they've been cut with a serrated blade. Messy, jagged. Like he's fueled by anger."

"An act of vengeance."

"Yes."

"Someone who has been wronged by the more privileged individuals of our society is not an uncommon theme of our world, unfortunately. This killer might be intending to show the wealthy what he's capable of. Remind them of the injustice they've caused."

“The question is, what kind of injustice happened to him that drove him to this point?”

“Have you found any shred of evidence so far?”

“Not yet, but one of the houses that received the package had a camera installed on the doorbell. Maybe the recorded footage can show us something.”

“Assuming the killer didn’t spot the camera.”

“It was hidden. Easy to miss if you’re not looking properly.”

Hannibal checked his watch. Time was almost up for Will. He usually was aware of it and would leave on his own, but this time, he didn’t budge from the sofa for some strange reason. Part of him wished the session lasted a little longer. He came back to resume his therapy and that was what he should stick to. He didn’t come here for social meetings, and yet, there he was, sitting there even after a good two minutes had elapsed after the end.

“Is there anything else?” Hannibal asked, breaking the silence.

The more Will kept his feelings bottled, the more complex they became. More questions than answers, more pieces to the puzzle.

“You said our friendship no longer existed,” he said.

“I was merely echoing what you told me when you were in prison,” Hannibal replied. “You weren’t completely wrong.”

“Yes. You took advantage of my mental instability. My physical illness. All in a false pretense of caring about me.”

“Is that what this is about?”

Hannibal’s eyes were inscrutable. Will found it hard to gauge his emotions.

“It’s about an apology,” he said.

“Am I the only one who owes it?” Hannibal asked.

“You owe it first. It started with you.”

“Did it ever occur to you that I only wanted what was best for you?”

Will sniggered. “You drove everyone away from me. You made me think I was crazy. I’d hardly call that best. Your friendship was a Judas kiss.”

“I never thought you were crazy, Will. Only special.”

Will felt a prick of anger. He clenched the armrests, trying to restrain himself. Hannibal noticed.

“Don’t try to justify it,” he said, voice lowering. “Does Alana know the truth about you? Does she know you’re lying to her?”

“She’s unaware,” Lecter replied.

Will gave a spiteful smirk and hummed before standing from the couch. He put on his jacket as he headed to the door.

“Will.”

He stopped, and turned around to see Hannibal standing too.

“Are you going to tell her the truth?” Hannibal asked.

“Does that worry you?”

“It would complicate things. There would be a mess to clean up.”

Will shook his head. “No. You’re not worried because you know Alana wouldn’t believe me. Nobody would. I tried once. She’s in the same place I once had been with you—under your control.”

Hannibal stared in silence. Will left, slamming the door behind him. He had no clue how he managed to repress his anger in there, seeing how Hannibal refused to admit he was in the wrong. That he always had an explanation for everything, no matter how twisted they were. If Will didn’t have self-control, he would’ve pounced on him and punched him in the face.

He clenched his fists as he walked along the streets. He didn’t know why he let that man get to him. For someone to incite that level of fury in you means you’ve willingly given them that power over you. It pissed Will off even more that Alana came into the picture. It was baffling how blissfully unaware she was to the truth.

He felt no different from the vengeful serial killer he was hunting.

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In contrast to Will’s anger, Hannibal remained calm. He was actually intrigued, and a little glad. Intrigued because Will circled around and came back to him after a rift had torn between them. Glad because Will’s anger meant that Hannibal had some form of impact on him. It would’ve been a lot worse if Will couldn’t care less about him, because that cold ignorance would’ve stung him worse than the burning anger.

Anger was better because it meant Will felt something.

Hannibal wouldn’t know what he would’ve done if Will actually ignored him, if he decided to never see him again and remove every shred of his existence from his life. He wanted Will's attention—positive or negative, it didn’t matter. It brought him to the realization that no matter what kind of a façade he put up, who he slept with, what kind of excuses he made, he would never, *ever* stop wanting Will. The more he tried to pull away, the more he ended up being pulled towards him.

Admittedly, he did feel heartbroken, so to speak, when Will held him at gunpoint. Then again, they had done a lot worse to each other, like sending someone to kill each other.

They were even.

When it came to the subject of Alana, Hannibal almost smirked in front of Will. He sensed the jealousy in him. It was peeking through the man's blue eyes. He was trying to conceal it but you can't hide anything from Hannibal Lecter. He'd see right through the masquerade.

Truth was, neither Alana nor Will knew about Hannibal's true intentions. Him being with her had an ulterior motive. She was his alibi. Nothing more. Just an excuse to mislead the cops. Though of course, it failed to mislead Will since he already knew the truth. It helped to get the rest of the FBI off his tail, at least.

But in no way did Hannibal harbor any feelings for her. He never could, when his heart was already owned by Will Graham. He could never feel about anyone the way he did about him.

Minutes after Will left his office, Hannibal stared at the door, a smile curving up his lips. He knew he'd be back and that was what thrilled him. Something had changed in Will. Hannibal sensed it in their recent session. He couldn't put a finger to what exactly. He had a theory, or more precisely, a hypothesis. He'd have to conduct a few more sessions to get answers.

For now, he had to get home. He expected Alana to drop by in a short while. With his mind too engrossed in Will, he lacked any interest in meeting her.

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The next day, Will stood near the body of the latest victim of the serial killer—*The Butcher*—as he was so tritely named. The victim, or what was left of her, was a thirty-something year old woman with the same MO as the previous victims—stabbed multiple times in the chest, limbs chopped off in a messy way. The head and torso were left. Except here, the right arm was partly cut, its two halves lying loose, like the killer had left the job unfinished.

Will closed his eyes and reconstructed the scene in his mind.

A vase lay smashed on the floor, either a result of conflict or the killer trying to make an escape. In this case, it was the latter, because according to Jack, the victim's husband had returned home from work earlier than he should have, to celebrate his anniversary with his wife. Will imagined himself from the perspective of the killer. He might not have expected the husband arriving that soon, and he was probably halfway through cutting the right arm when he heard the car pull over. So he left the arm, grabbed his weapons and the other severed limbs, and rushed out of there through the back door. Usually he wouldn't leave a trace, but this was done in haste, so he left a partial bloody footprint behind.

"A few seconds sooner, and the husband would've seen the killer," Will said.

"Yeah," Jack said. "Something's different about this."

"Did the security cameras of that house the killer visited catch anything?"

“No, he wore a mask. He seemed to know where the camera was.”

“I underestimated him. This looks like a loose end. We were waiting for the killer to slip-up, and he did. I’m assuming he’s already packaged a limb.”

“He did send a package to the husband a few hours later. We have it right here, with a little addition.”

Jack handed Will a small cardboard box. Usually the packages would contain a part of the chopped limb and a personal belonging of the victim. This time, along with those two things, there was a bloody note included in this package. On it was scribbled:

‘I told you, you’ll never forget me’

“So, the killer knew the husband,” Will said. “It’s personal.”

The other two things in the box was a severed human hand and a golden wedding ring.

“Brad Wesley,” Jack replied. “We already brought him for questioning.”

“Did he say anything?” Will asked.

“Not much, aside from the fact that he doesn’t know what the note means and who the killer is. He swore on it.”

“Or maybe he forgot. Sometimes we forget we actually know something.”

“Or—maybe it’s the trauma. He just saw his wife hacked into pieces.”

Will returned the box to him. Then walked to the front door to see Alana, pulling her red trench coat snug to her chest. *Really bad timing*, he thought. He came here hoping the case would distract his mind. He’d always see things he couldn’t unsee and that was his painful gift. Usually, his empathic abilities felt like a burden, but now, he actually wished they would take over his brain so he didn’t have to think about Hannibal.

So much for that.

Seeing Alana turned his mood sour as a lemon. It was weird as to why he suddenly felt uncomfortable around her. She was a friend, after all. He knew what he was feeling, but he refused to admit it.

“Will,” she said.

“Alana,” he said, disinterestedly. “What’re you doing here?”

“She’s the one who interrogated Brad Wesley.” Jack walked past them and towards his car.

“Right,” Will muttered. “Of course.”

“I came here for a different reason, though,” Alana said. “I’m looking for Hannibal. I thought he’d be with you.”

“Why would he be? After everything? Besides, shouldn’t you know where he is? He could’ve given you the keys to his house for all I know.”

She cocked her head. “Seriously?”

Will walked past her. “It’s not impossible and it wouldn’t surprise me.”

Not surprised, but he might feel jealous.

That was it. The feeling he refused to admit.

Jealousy.

He took his glasses off and shoved them in his pocket. It didn’t make sense. *Why the hell should I care? I don’t give a rat’s ass who Hannibal sleeps with.*

Unfortunately, his heart wasn’t in sync with his mind. As embarrassing and awkward as it was, it was chasing the enigmatic doctor.

Nothing could ruffle his feathers more than that.

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“I’m thinking Brad Wesley knows more than he’s letting on,” Will said, pacing around the large open space of Hannibal’s office.

Hannibal leaned against his desk. “You think he lied to Alana during the interrogation.”

“Most likely.”

“Were you present at the interrogation?”

“No, but that package the killer sent to Brad says a lot. All the other packages sent to the families of the victims contained a part of the limbs and a personal item of value. This one had a note as well — *‘I told you, you won’t forget me’*.”

“A personal vendetta. Brad Wesley could be the root cause of the killer’s motives. I assume he’s also wealthy and influential.”

“Yes, he is.”

“In that sense, the killer is punishing everyone who are like Mr. Wesley. Anyone rich and powerful takes the brunt of his rage.”

“He’s trying to make a statement. He's experienced some kind of trauma that sparked the rage. Brad claims he doesn’t remember anything. He hasn’t said anything to anyone as of yet.”

“Then maybe you’ll have a better chance at convincing.”

Will hummed, his mind struggling to focus on the case and instead wandering off into bothersome thoughts.

“You seem preoccupied,” Hannibal said.

Will sighed. “Alana is looking for you. She showed up at the crime scene. She was the one who interrogated Brad.”

He gave Hannibal a sidelong glance, catching a glimpse of his face, trying to see any shift in his stoic expression, but there wasn’t any. Hannibal looked casual. Unreadable, as always.

“I see." He stared at Will for a moment. “Something tells me you weren’t particularly comfortable in her presence.”

“That obvious, huh?”

“You’re an open book to read sometimes, especially when something’s troubling you.”

“You think Alana’s troubling me?”

“Is she?”

Will frowned slightly. “I don’t know. I kept the conversation short.”

“So she is troubling you in a way.”

“Does that bother you?”

“Nothing about you bothers me, Will.”

The doctor truly had an art for peering into someone’s soul and reading out their secrets. It was hard for Will to deny his words. It was also hard for him to deny the changes he had felt over the recent sessions. He wanted to be mad, and wanted Hannibal to apologize. He still did, but the anger wasn’t as severe as it was before. He could never forget how he felt around him. He’d feel like a freak around everyone else, or a tool for their purposes, at their disposal. Hannibal was the only one around whom he felt like a person. Where he didn’t need to feel like something was wrong with him, or that his opinions and emotions didn’t count. He didn’t need to explain himself or his feelings in detail for Hannibal to fill in the blank spaces. The doctor understood, no matter how he expressed it.

In spite of the recent conflict between them, Hannibal didn’t condemn him or berate him in any way. He had every chance to refuse Will when he first came back to therapy, but he didn’t. He didn’t judge him when he could’ve. It had been three weeks since Will resumed his therapy. Long enough for his feelings to evolve.

He wasn’t fooling anyone.

“You still owe me an apology,” he said.

Hannibal dropped his gaze for a second. “In that case, so do you.”

Suddenly worked up, Will clenched his teeth and walked near him. “No, you started it. I trusted you, shared everything with you and you lied to me.”

“Will my apology change anything?”

“It’ll give me satisfaction.”

“You got back at me. In a way, you had your revenge. We are even now.”

“Are we?”

Hannibal stared at him for a moment, his amber eyes observing him.

“Your anger seems to be a mask for something else,” he said, with a soft smack of his thin lips. “Or rather, you’re expressing it for the wrong reason. It feels… deliberate. Why are you *really* angry?”

Damn him.

Will turned around and took slow steps away from him before turning to him again.

“I want Alana out of this. I don’t want her to be involved.”

“If I’m not wrong,” Hannibal said. “I’d say you’re jealous.”

Will almost twitched at the word. How uncomfortable it made him feel, even if it was the truth.

“So what if I am?” he said, to conceal his emotions, in vain. Easier said than done for an empath. “You dragged her into this. You’re going to let her go. Or I will do it myself.”

He expected Hannibal to refuse. If that happened, then he would have no choice but to tell the truth. The one he’d been denying for so long.

“I see,” Hannibal said. “You want me to stay away from her because you still have feelings for her.”

Will stopped in his tracks, staring at him. For someone as astute as him, Will couldn’t believe he'd be so dim. If he wasn’t upset, he would’ve laughed. He could no longer hold it back anymore. When it came down to saying the truth, his stomach fluttered.

He huffed softly. “No, it’s because I’m…”

Hannibal tilted his head a little.

Will’s Adam’s apple bobbed. “I’m drawn towards you.”

A still silence fell in the room and time seemed to have stopped. Even Hannibal couldn’t prevent his emotions from showing on his face. His lips parted and his amber eyes gleamed

with surprise. Will felt strange, not knowing what to say next, not knowing whether to leave or not.

Leave. Before it gets weirder.

He turned and left the office without looking back at him.

There had been a time when Will would've laughed if someone told him he'd develop feelings for the doctor. Hell, he still didn't believe it was happening. As he walked out of the building, the streets and the night sky suddenly felt different, as if he had transported to another city.

Everything had changed now.

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Everything had changed for Hannibal too. Never in his wildest dreams did he imagine Will would say something like that. He was in love with him, and he figured it would take some effort to repair their bond, to get him to reciprocate those feelings. But *never* did he think it would happen so fast. Especially with the rift between them.

Everything around him faded into black—his office, his desk and chair, the stag statue, his books. All of it vanished into thin air, leaving him in empty blackness with only his thoughts. Will's words wandered deep into the recesses of his mind, making themselves at home in his memory palace. It was all he ever wanted and his wish came true in the most unexpected way.

The best way.

After that, he couldn't care less about anything or anyone else, save for Will.

He had tried to become accustomed to Will's hostility initially. He really believed their friendship would never revert to what it once was, and perhaps he'd never get to see Will as anything other than his patient. The initial sessions had felt… detached, like he wasn't sitting in front of the man he knew. No matter how close Will was to him, he still seemed distant.

Now… their friendship certainly didn't go back to what it was. Instead, it evolved into something more, much to Hannibal's amazement.

Hours after Will had left, Hannibal stayed back in his office, sitting quietly at his desk and sketching away in his book. All the pictures he drew were of Will. His face, or just him standing and reading something or sitting in that leather sofa. Among those drawings were erotic ones too. He couldn't stop himself from fantasizing, all the while with a subtle smile on his face.

…

The following day, Will didn't show up for his seven-thirty PM appointment when he usually would be on time.

Hannibal quickly missed his presence. He glanced at his watch. It was eight. His phone lay on his desk, and he eyed it, contemplating on using it. He thought of paying Will a visit, but it might give off an impression of desperation. Hannibal's pride wouldn't allow it. He hoped Will would walk through that door any moment.

It was then he heard muffled footsteps outside his door. He rose from his chair and went to open it. Alana stood at the threshold, one of her fists raised up as if about to knock.

"Oh," she said. "You sure are sharp."

If Hannibal hadn't mastered the art of concealing his emotions, then Alana would've seen his face fall at the sight of her.

"Alana."

"Hope I'm not intruding."

"Certainly not. Although my schedule is completely packed today."

"Right, of course. I won't keep you. I simply came over because I haven't been able to reach you in the past couple of days." She smiled. "I was wondering if we could have dinner tonight."

Unfortunately, I'm not in the mood right now. "I'm afraid I have some late appointments. Can we take a rain-check?"

"Is Will Graham one of those late appointments?"

Highly perceptive of her.

"He didn't show up," Hannibal said.

"I see," she replied. "I still think it's weird that you're having him back in therapy again."

If there was anything weird, it was the beginning of this love triangle. Alana didn't like Hannibal seeing Will, and Will didn't like him seeing her. He should be flattered, though he didn't feel the same way about her as he did about Will.

"I can't deny my services to anyone," he said. "I'm happy Will came back to therapy. It would've been worse if he didn't. We are discovering something new about each other every day."

Alana hummed. Her smile reduced and her face showed disapproval. "Well, as long as he doesn't try to hurt you again."

"You needn't worry about me," Hannibal replied. "Will has no intention of hurting me anymore. He said so himself."

"And you trust him?"

Trust. Quite complex that simple word.

It was child's play for Hannibal to tell if someone was lying to him, and Will wasn't lying when he said he didn't want to harm Hannibal anymore.

"I trust him to keep his word, yes."

"You're being too considerate," Alana said. "Borderline naive."

Hannibal grew slightly restless. "The only thing I can say right now is that it's a work in progress. *Will* is a work in progress. I apologize for dinner."

The smile returned on her face. "It's alright. We can take a rain-check."

She moved closer and pressed a kiss to Hannibal's lips, letting her hand linger on his chest. Though he wasn't in the mood, he still indulged her. After all, she was his alibi. The one who would vouch for him to the cops, and divert any suspicion of him being the Chesapeake Ripper.

Maybe he should've checked his surroundings first, though. He heard the sound of footsteps and broke the kiss immediately, looking up to see Will Graham standing there in the hallway. Almost as if he materialized out of thin air.

"Will." Hannibal's voice almost faltered.

Alana turned around to see him. Will's gaze darted between her and Hannibal, then he gave a half-smile which came out forced.

"Sorry to intrude," he said, and walked off.

Hannibal brushed past her and called out, "Will."

"What was that all about?" she asked. "I thought you said he didn't show up."

"He hadn't," Hannibal replied. *He showed up late and at bad timing.* "I'll call you tomorrow."

"Okay," she said.

Thankfully, she left, but not soon enough to spare Will the uncomfortable sight of the kiss. There was a dull ache in Hannibal's stomach. He wished the man didn't show up right at that moment to witness that.

Most of all, he wished he sent Alana away sooner.

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Will didn't think last night's little glimpse would ruin his mood all over again. The next day, he showed up at the bureau looking like he wanted to kill everyone. He barely made eye contact with any officer. He usually never did, anyway. It was his turn to interrogate Brad

Wesley and Jack was hoping he could get something out of him. Jack was mostly concerned about the Ripper case, and it frustrated him enough that he was getting nowhere with it. He could've gotten somewhere if he had believed Will's words about Hannibal being the Ripper.

Graham stopped convincing anyone of the truth now. He had enough. Right now, the memory of Alana kissing Hannibal ticked him off. The fact the kiss affected him in the first place ticked him off even more. He hated this petty feeling. He couldn't brush it off. He walked into the interrogation room with his patience half-depleted.

"I already spoke to that agent and that woman," Brad said, tired and frustrated.

"Well, you haven't spoken to me." Will sat across the table. "And I think you're lying about not knowing who the killer is."

"I'm not lying! I don't know who he is, or why he sent me that note."

"People often turn a blind eye to the mistakes they made. Even forget about them. This killer had been wronged by someone who was rich and powerful, and now he's taking his anger out on all the rich and powerful. He just killed your wife, Mr. Wesley. And he won't stop until he's killed everyone you love."

Brad leaned forward, placing folded hands on the table. He dropped his head, letting out a shaky breath.

"I don't know…" his voice cracked. "I don't know anything."

"You wronged someone. Maybe robbed them of their privilege because you had more money. Maybe… someone had lost something because of you. In some way, your wealth has caused injustice to someone." Will leaned forward. "See, I think you're hiding something, Brad. It would be in our best interest if you told the truth, and we catch this killer. 'Cause I don't think he likes loose ends. Like you."

Brad paled. He shook his head, mumbling, "No. I don't know… I…" He stopped, forehead creasing. "Wait."

Will tilted his head a little, waiting.

"The only thing I can remember is the hospital," Brad said. "Um… about a year ago, my wife —" he paused, choked with emotion. "—she fell sick, really sick, and we went to the hospital. The place was crowded. There were people waiting for their turn, but there weren't a lot of empty beds for all of them. Some of them came way before I did. I was afraid because my wife's condition was worsening by the minute. I couldn't wait, so I… I bribed the doctors. They managed to get her into the ICU."

"That would mean you stole someone else's opportunity for treatment," Will said.

Brad nodded, lips trembling. "I found out later that this man, whose sister had been in a car accident and needed urgent medical attention, had come before me. His sister was supposed to go into the ICU, but the doctors took my wife instead."

“Now he’s returning the favor. Do you know his name?”

“No. All I remember is the way he cursed me because his sister didn’t make it. He promised he would pay back. At the time, I was concerned about my wife and nothing else.”

“Do you remember what he looked like?”

“Vaguely.”

“Would you recognize him if you saw him?”

“I—I suppose.”

At the very least, the killer’s motives were abundantly clear now. Though Will didn’t get a physical description, he still felt like he was getting closer.

He stood and left the interrogation room, to the observation room where Jack and Alana were.

“So?” Jack asked.

“I think the killer will make his move again,” Will adjusted his glasses. “He’s not going to let Brad go. It all started with him. The killer will come to cut the head of the snake.”

“So, what do you suggest?”

“That we give Brad to him.”

“What?” Alana frowned. “You want to use him as bait?”

“You have a better idea, I’m all ears,” Will said. “This is our best shot at catching the killer. We shouldn’t pretend we haven’t baited killers before to catch them. Desperate times call for desperate measures.”

“We're dealing with someone who knows how to disappear. We haven’t been able to catch him until now.”

“Exactly.”

Alana cocked her head. “I'm starting to think you lack a sense of danger.”

Will sniggered. “If anyone lacks a sense of danger, it’s you, Doctor Bloom. You also lack an awareness of the company you keep. You get blinded easily. Of course, you wouldn’t see that.”

Alana gave him an *‘excuse me’* kind of look. Jack sensed the tension and intervened before it got out of hand, bringing everyone’s attention to the current matter.

“Hey, we have bigger fish to fry,” he said. “Your plan’s risky, Will, you know that, right?”

“Yes,” Will replied.

“Well, I suppose we have no choice. We could have officers surrounding his house, hiding in plain sight. We get the killer when he comes, dead or alive.”

Alana scoffed in complete disagreement with the idea. Will gave a nod, then left, pulling his coat together. He put on his leather gloves as he exited the building. That little jibe at Alana back there was definitely deliberate, yet it also felt quite childish because it was driven by envy. He thought about the time he had once kissed her and wondered why he had done that. The mix of feelings swirling inside him irritated him to no end, and came out in sarcastic remarks at her. He didn’t want to go against her. It felt as if something else was driving his words.

Closing his eyes, he rubbed his face.

He could use a damn drink.

***

Hannibal hadn’t seen Will for a couple of days now and had become restive. He did drive over to his house earlier in the morning but Will wasn’t there. Even if he was, he was probably ignoring him. Either way, Hannibal found himself unable to tend to his other patients as effectively as usual. He’d silently feel relieved when the sessions were done and the patients left. Then he would look at the time, feel the minutes ticking away so painfully slow they felt like hours. And the hours like days.

Today was such a day. Too damn long.

He sketched away at his desk, Will’s face filling up the pages of his book, secretly yearning for him somewhere deep within. He put the pencil down and opened a book which contained the names of his patients and their appointments. He stared at the very last entry on the page —

W. Graham – 7.30 PM

His sharp ears caught a muffled sound outside his office then and his head perked up. He closed the book and rose, walking to the door.

Lo and behold, there was Will Graham at the doorway like a sight for sore eyes. Hannibal’s heart instantly lifted and his evening became infinitely better.

“Good evening, Will." He smiled. “I thought you’d never show up.”

“I was contemplating on whether I should,” Will replied.

“The fact you’re here means you decided.” Hannibal stepped aside, holding the door wide open. “Come in.”

Will entered, rubbing his stubble. He had on a light blue Henley, sleeves rolled up to his elbows, and a dark button-down vest which was undone.

Hannibal closed the door. “How’s the investigation going?”

Will pushed his hands into the pockets of his dark jeans. “There’s some progress.”

“Your face tells me you’re not getting anywhere close to catching the killer yet. You need more.”

“Yeah? What else does my face tell you?”

“That you have something to say to me. Last time we saw each other, you left abruptly.”

“You were clearly busy. I walked in at the wrong time. There was no use for me being there.”

Hannibal sensed the disapproval in Will’s brusque reply. “You caught me in an uncomfortable position.”

Will huffed. “I doubt it. You seemed very comfortable.”

“Will—”

“I told you to stay away from her.”

Those words came out unintentionally sharp, formed by underlying feelings that Will failed to express properly. Hannibal knew. He read between the lines. He could make this conversation easier for Will but he secretly wanted him to speak the truth he refused to. He wanted to bring his hidden feelings to the surface, positive and negative.

“Does it truly rub you the wrong way to see me with Alana?” he asked.

Will looked at him, jaw twitching. Hannibal expected him to lie, to dodge the question, or beat around the bush because admitting it wasn’t easy.

“Yes,” came the honest reply.

Hannibal’s brows rose in surprise.

“That’s what I don’t get,” Will added. “Why you of all people? Everything you did to me was contemptible.”

“And you returned the favor. You had your revenge on me. We had both sent someone to kill each other too. What was it you said? Even Steven?”

Will’s fists clenched, his eyes glistening with emotion. They had been going over the same conversation repeatedly now and it was going nowhere. Hannibal figured he needed to tone it down a bit. He didn’t want Will to leave again in anger. Not now. Not when things had gotten this far, when he’d finally showed up after what felt like an eternity.

“It’s only a matter of time before Jack and Alana discover the truth about you,” said Will. “Jack already has suspicions.”

Hannibal glanced down. “I suppose you look forward to finding me in a prison cell.”

“Part of me wants to.”

“Only a part?”

Will rubbed his mouth. He was conflicted, which was good. At least, for Hannibal. It served as an advantage, so Hannibal could maneuver him into accepting his feelings.

“Is it truly that big of a mistake to surrender to your true feelings?” he asked.

“With you? Yes,” Will answered. “Because I never expected it, and because I can’t—” He shook his head. “—I don’t know why it has to be you. I haven’t even forgiven you yet.”

“It’s time we did. We both have played our part equally.”

“Oh, really?” Will gave a half-hearted smile. “To think of all the people, I bared myself to *you*, shared my pain, my—weaknesses, all so you could trample on them, you bastard.”

He exhaled sharply and turned around, pinching his eyes to wipe the tears. Until now, it didn’t matter to Hannibal what Will felt about him, so long as Will paid attention to him. However, at this moment, it affected him to see him this way, and he knew exactly how he felt because he felt the same too.

To be in love with someone meant allowing yourself to be vulnerable around them. Neither Hannibal nor Will liked being vulnerable, and yet, they couldn’t help it when they were around each other. Hannibal wanted him to give in to the evident attraction, the palpable tension crackling between them. It hung heavily in the air, like an enormous storm cloud. Hannibal wished Will could see the feelings he had since the first time he laid eyes on Will in Jack’s office. The instant entrancement at the curly-haired younger man who was so vastly different from everyone else. Unique, purely empathetic, highly intelligent.

Beautiful.

But not like this. Hannibal didn’t want him to be hurting.

“We need to put our differences in the past, Will,” he said. “They don’t serve us anymore.”

Will walked to Hannibal’s desk where several papers of his art were on display. He slowly spread out the papers, staring at the numerous portraits and pieces of him. The message was abundantly clear from them. Hannibal didn’t need to say a thing.

“I didn’t just come here to remind you to stay away from her.” Will moved to the front of the desk and leaning against it, gripping the edge. “I came here because I wanted to know what it feels like. I wanted to know if what I feel… isn’t fleeting.”

Hannibal paused. “How do you intend to find out?”

Will drew a deep breath, taking off his glasses and speaking in an enticing soft tone. “Come here.”

As if lured towards a siren by its song, Hannibal approached him, close enough to see the kaleidoscope of blue hues in his eyes. He smelled that awful aftershave on him, though he didn't mind it. It wasn't the only scent he picked up. There was also the subtle, sweet scent which was uniquely Will that Hannibal loved. It had been a long, *long* time since he was this close to him in a situation like this, devoid of any hostility.

Will placed a hand on Hannibal's cheek. A simple gesture, yet it set off a spark inside Hannibal's body. His mouth parted slightly, his body relaxed, and he leaned into his palm, closing his eyes to cherish that touch he'd been starved for. It was amazing how every little thing Will did had the power to turn his world around.

He held Will's hand, nuzzling his lips to his palm as he exhaled slowly, melting into the feel of it. He opened his eyes to see Will inching closer until his lips found Hannibal's thin ones, fitting perfectly into them. Thorns and roses bloomed in Hannibal's heart. The kiss was a cold wind and a blazing fire all at once. It took Hannibal by surprise because never expected this to happen after everything. Because *the* Will Graham he'd been longing for since day one made the first move.

Hannibal gave a fitting response. He opened his mouth to invite him in. Will's tongue explored the warm spaces of his mouth, licking its roof and the inside of his cheek. Their tongues danced. Hannibal clenched Will's vest at the hips and tugged him closer. He pushed back, deepening the kiss, until it was all he felt in his veins. Every second thought, suspicion and doubt had long since disappeared. There were no inhibitions.

As if drugged, Hannibal leaned towards Will, his kisses slowly getting urgent. Will tasted sweet. *So sweet.* Hannibal gently nipped his bottom lip, careful not to hurt him. Will's stubble lightly grazed his skin, and his lips. Hannibal wanted to feel him in his bones, his soul, his heart. He never wanted to hurt him anymore. Not after this.

As Will peeled away from the kiss, Hannibal leaned in, wanting more. His breathing picked up pace. He stared at him with a need, a love only Will could fathom. Only he could satisfy. Hannibal stared at him like he had given himself up to him, like the man was some sort of treasure he wanted to protect.

This… This was worth the wait. The endless yearning. Having been able to only express his desires through drawings.

This was all he wanted.

Will's gaze softened, his breath heaving. Reaching for his vest, he took it off and dropped it to the floor. He drew his shirt up, over his head, and got rid of it too, making sure Hannibal's eyes were fixed on him. Hannibal couldn't avert his gaze even if he wanted. Will was too mesmerizing to look away from.

Taking Hannibal's hand, Will placed it on his heart. Hannibal felt it pounding in his bare chest and felt his own heart picking up pace. Will swallowed, standing there and letting him do whatever he wanted. Hannibal stole the chance to feel his body, skimming his hand across his pecs, letting his palm rub against his nipples. He pressed one of the nubs with his thumb, teasing it. Will sighed, trying to keep his eyes from closing. He wanted to watch Hannibal

touch and fondle him everywhere. He quivered a little when Hannibal smoothed down his ribs, his leanly toned muscles, caressing his waist, his stomach, then slid his hand straight up to his chest again.

Will's skin felt so deliciously warm and smooth under Hannibal's fingers.

"Will," he breathed.

Will undid Hannibal's tie and threw it to the floor, then caught the lapels of his suit and pushed them over his shoulders. Hannibal let him get rid of it, then do the same to his shirt. Will took his time with the buttons, his eyes darting between Hannibal's face and the skin being exposed. He kissed him before pushing his shirt down his arms and onto the floor.

Every piece of clothing removed was like taking a chance. Every part of their bodies exposed was a discovery. They were studying each other, observing each other in ways they never did before, and wished they had.

Will unbuttoned his own jeans and pushed them down along with his boxers, giving Hannibal a raw, explicit view of his body. Hannibal couldn't stop himself from running his hands all over him again. Will dropped kisses down his chest, his soft lips brushing against the fine hair on it. Hannibal dropped his head back and sighed, threading his fingers in Will's dark curls. He gently tugged back Will's head, lifting his other hand up to trace Will's lips with his thumb. He pinched his chin as he *took* his mouth passionately. The sensual heat radiating from Will gave rise to a carnal desire in Hannibal.

"Take me," Will whispered. "I want to feel it. Do with me what you did with her."

Hannibal stopped and inched back, staring at him like he'd uttered something he shouldn't. Because he did.

Alana was a sharp contrast from him, and whatever Hannibal did with her or felt about her was nothing compared to what he felt about him. She and Will were worlds apart from each other, on opposite ends of the solar system.

"I can't do that," he replied.

"Why?" Will asked. "Because you don't want me?"

It stung Hannibal that Will thought that way.

"No, because everything I do with her isn't out of sentiment," he said. "It is out of necessity. The need for an alibi. It's purely physical and nothing else. I can't do that with you because it would be wrong. What I feel for you is far beyond mere physicality."

Will momentarily fell silent. Hannibal wanted him to know the depths of his heart, the deepest recesses within which his devotion to Will lay.

Will must've sensed it because when he kissed him again, he did so with a fervid intensity. He nipped at Hannibal's bottom lip. In between, he unbuckled his belt, sliding it out of the loops of the trousers and dropping it to the floor. The trousers and boxer briefs followed. Will

perched himself on the desk, raising his thighs and spreading his legs wide for him, and *goddamn it*, Hannibal needed a second to breathe because he knew he would never get the chance now. Will sat there with his cock curved up. The erotic fantasies Hannibal expressed through art were coming to life in a way he never imagined. Though this was way better than any fantasy he could've dreamt of.

Because this was real.

He glided his hands along Will's strong thighs, further inward till he reached his cock. He gave the warm, hard flesh a squeeze, making Will quiver.

Leaning forward, he brought their lips together again. Will leaned back, propping himself up with his arms. He dropped his head back with a sigh as Hannibal kissed and licked a path down his chest to his stomach. Coiling an arm around Will's legs, he sucked the skin along his inner thighs, his mouth running over Will's crotch before finding his cock. He glanced at him in between while sucking his balls.

"Oh," Will moaned. "Oh, God, Hannibal."

Hannibal kissed along the hard length before taking it into his mouth, drawing it in and out. Will clenched his hair, grinding into him.

"Yes," he exhaled. "God, yes. Take it."

His cock swelled and hardened in Hannibal's mouth.

Hannibal's brain focused entirely on what he tasted, and he couldn't get enough. His own cock hung heavy. He didn't mind the sting when Will tugged his hair. If anything, it turned him on even more. He stroked Will's balls expertly with one hand while he sucked harder, and Will could barely steady himself on the desk.

It was too much for both of them. Too overwhelming.

Hannibal's desire was insatiable. He worshipped the man he was making love to, the man who had taken over his life. He took his mouth off Will's cock with a smack, and shot him a lustful glance as he tongued the pink, glistening tip. He moved back up to kiss his lips. In between, he positioned himself, slipping the wide head of his cock into Will's snug little hole. Will braced himself with little success. Neither of them cared if someone were to stand outside the office and eavesdrop.

Hannibal grunted as he entered him, feeling the delicious heat, the tightness of his internal walls. Will lay back on the table, arching his chest at the penetration. Hannibal clutched his legs firmly and sunk his cock all the way in. He couldn't ease into it. His raging need didn't let him. Will let out a cry.

Hannibal remembered being intimate with Alana but he never felt this way with her. With her, it was simply sexual pleasure, and a way to blind her from the truth to who he really was.

With Will, it was so much more. More than what could be expressed in words. Hell, Hannibal found it hard to believe he was making love to this man in the first place. He was unprepared for how unexpectedly it happened. He had already dived too far into the deep end of this ocean to back out now. Caught in the middle of it, far away from shore, far away from any logical reasoning that might stop him from doing this, that might tell him Will hated him. That this might just be him trying to mess with his head.

Hannibal didn't care about any of it.

He surged deep inside the man, gasping at the sweet spasms, the slick, sensitive muscles milking his cock. He felt hot and cold at the same time, his body tingling all over. His shaft ached and throbbed. Letting go of Will's legs, he bent over him and captured his mouth in a scorching kiss. His hands played with Will's body. Even when the kiss broke, their swollen and reddened lips moved against each other, breathing in each other.

Will held Hannibal's face, looking at him in a way he never did before—with an ardent passion. Before this, it had been cold shoulders and icy stares, shallow conversations and bouts of anger. Hannibal reached down between them and stroked Will's cock, watching his slate-blue eyes roll back and flutter shut, and his head fall back to the table.

"Faster," Will groaned. "Don't stop."

Hannibal wouldn't resist that. He picked up the tempo of his thrusts. The sounds of their shallow breaths filled the room. Will sat up, binding an arm around his shoulder, and placing his other hand on the table to hold himself up. Hannibal could feel he was close from the way his cock pulsed in his hand. Will kissed him roughly, then broke contact when he came. He cried out, coming hard between their stomachs and all over Hannibal's hand. Hannibal squeezed his cock as he joined him, spurting hotly inside him. Releasing his shaft, he hugged him, grinding into him until he had emptied every single drop.

Hannibal dropped a hand to the table, burying his face in Will's neck. Will's unique scent lingered strongly with the heat and sweat of his body. To Hannibal, it was as heady as any perfume. He panted while Will stroked his salt and pepper hair.

"How long?" Will said, breathless. "How long have you been in love with me?"

Finally. The right question.

Hannibal pulled back to see his face. "Since the first moment I saw you. I thought it was mere infatuation and it'll pass. I was wrong."

Will caressed his cheek before pressing his red lips to his.

"Then why are you with Alana?"

"It's not what you think," Hannibal replied. "There's a reason I'm with her. I told you."

"It doesn't matter. Because you'll have to choose now."

Will nudged him back and got off the desk. Hannibal grabbed some tissues and handed some to him. They cleaned themselves before dressing up. As Will buttoned up his jeans and picked up his shirt. Hannibal eyed his lean muscles, wishing he could worship them one more time.

“Are you giving me an ultimatum?” he asked.

Will put his shirt on, followed by the vest, then his socks and shoes. “You can’t have both, Hannibal. You alienated me from everyone because you didn’t want anyone in my life that isn’t you. It’s your turn to return the favor.” He gave him a last look. “I’ll let you decide.”

Hannibal noticed a hint of disappointment in those words. He buttoned up his shirt and put on his tie. His body still tingled from being pressed up against Will. His heart felt unexpectedly lighter, making him wonder what was weighing it down in the first place.

Yearning.

That’s what.

The endless pining for Will, the need to have him, built up inside Hannibal like a mountain and he didn’t realize how heavy it weighed on him until it was lifted. Will took the burden off and left Hannibal at a crossroads. Alana was his most effective lie, and he couldn’t just give that up. Not with the risk of the cops suspecting he might be the Chesapeake Ripper. She was the only way to take the surveillance off him, act as an intervention when the cops came to question him.

However, he couldn’t give up Will either. Nobody else could fill the Will Graham shaped void in his life.

This was a hell of an ultimatum.

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Will hated the task of going place to place to question people for information. He knew it was a vital part of police job but God, it was frustrating. Time consuming. And being someone who didn’t like to be a sociable a lot, it was a test of his patience. So, the next day, he practically trudged along with Jack Crawford to the hospital where Brad Wesley had admitted his wife when she was severely sick.

They spoke to the woman at the front desk, who told of a man whose sister was dying and he had created quite a scene with Brad Wesley. Yelling and cursing him and all the doctors there. It took the woman a minute to pull up records from a year ago.

“Here he is,” she said. “James Pearson. His sister was Marie Pearson.”

Will and Jack glanced at each other. It was all they needed.

“Thank you,” Jack said. “That was helpful.”

They left the hospital.

“So, we track the guy down and then bait him,” Jack said.

“No, he’ll come to us,” Will replied. “Or… he’ll come to Brad.”

“I really hope this plan of yours works.”

“Me too.”

They had to explain the plan to Brad back at FBI headquarters, along with mentioning the killer’s identity. Of course, Brad thought it was lunacy, which Will expected.

“Are you kidding me?” he exclaimed. “It’s suicide! I’m not going to put myself out there and wait to be killed.”

“Technically, this started with you, so you don’t have much of a choice,” Jack said. “We’ll be watching the perimeters. As soon as James comes in, we grab him.”

“This is stupid. I don’t want to die.”

“Well, you’ll die anyway, so might as well do some good before you go,” Will said, coolly.

Jack side-eyed him.

“We’ll be nearby, Mr. Wesley,” he said. “I can assure you. This is the only way to stop him.”

It took a bit of persuasion to get Brad to comply. He figured he really didn’t have a choice.

Chapter 2

The FBI had to wait till dark for the killer to show up. Five tactical officers hid among the trees and bushes that surrounded Brad's ostentatious two-storey mansion. They could see him in the top floor balcony, pacing about anxiously with a glass of wine in his hands. No matter how many times Will and Jack told him to stay calm, the man naturally couldn't.

Jack and Will waited across the street from the house, sitting in their car with the lights off. It was hard to notice them with their car parked among a line of others unless someone looked closely.

Yet another thing Will despised.

Waiting.

He exhaled, leaning his head back into the seat.

"You don't look so good," Jack said.

Will bobbed his eyebrows. "Yeah? What else is new?"

"You've been preoccupied for the past few days, and a bit touchy if you're not already. Your mind's not—"

"Focused?"

"You need sleep."

Will rubbed his face, feeling the weight of sleep on his eyelids. "What I need is to be able to shut my brain off."

"Hmm. That I can't help you with. Your mind's a complicated thing I don't want to mess with."

"Technically, you calling me to do the job is kinda messing with it."

"I can't help it when you're the best."

The radio in Jack's car crackled to life and the concerned voice of one agent spoke through.

"Sir, he just went inside the house. Hasn't come out."

"Do you see the target?"

"Negative. Lights are out."

Will glanced at the house. Brad wasn't there anymore. The lights on the top floor were switched off while the ones at the bottom floor were still on.

It dawned on him.

The killer was already inside.

“Shit.” He opened the door and ran out. "The killer's in there!"

“Will!” Jack’s voice sounded behind him.

Will didn’t stop. He bounded across the large front yard. The officers concealed among the trees came out too, rushing towards the house. Will barged through the front door and headed for the stairs. Just as he went up the first step, he saw a man dashing out the back door, and stopped. He almost stumbled over the step as he went down and towards the back door.

In the lush open backyard, the black-clad figure ran towards the trees with Will on his tail, running as fast as his legs could carry. They went into the woods. Leaves rustled, and twigs cracked under their shoes. Adrenaline rushed through Will’s veins, driving him forward, and yet, he didn’t seem to get any closer to the killer who ran with an athletic speed. The killer got further away. The biggest reason being the thick woods, which proved to be a huge inconvenience for Will. The branches sticking out of trees ripped his jacket sleeves and smacked into his face, slowing him down. The killer wasn’t affected by them in the least. It was too dark in the woods for Will to keep his sights on the target. The inadequate moonlight wasn’t helpful.

The killer suddenly turned right and ran. Will did too, refusing to lose him. By then, he had wandered too deep into the woods.

Too deep until he lost sight of the target.

He stopped, panting heavily. His lungs burned. His knees hurt. He looked around, trying to spot any movement in what little moonlight shone through the trees.

Damn it.

Every crack of a twig, the rustle of a leaf alerted him. The sounds seemed to come from all around him. It was disorienting.

Then he heard a twig breaking that sounded a little too close behind him. He stilled as he sensed a presence. Spinning around, he saw the killer barely a few feet away, trying to sneak up on him with a knife. Will darted backwards as the killer swung the knife at him in a violent arc, ripping a hole in his shirt. Unprepared for the flurry of swift attacks, Will kept evading him, looking for an opportunity to attack. At this rate, he might just be risking himself.

Screw it, he thought, and seized a chance to grab hold of the killer’s arm and yank him close, bashing his face into the tree trunk nearby. Will wrenched his arm painfully, trying to get him to drop the blade, but the killer held on to it stubbornly. Will rammed his fist into his stomach, knocking the wind out of his lungs. The attacks stunned the killer for a few seconds before he recovered quickly. He clasped Will’s neck firmly with one hand, choking him as he pinned him to the tree, then head-butting his face. Will saw a flash of white, followed by a

throbbing pain flooding his nose, stunning him for a moment. He didn't register the next punch to his face, or when the killer threw him to the ground.

Next thing he knew, there was this dark figure hovering above him, glaring at him out of menacing eyes. Will couldn't get a good look at his face but he did catch the glint of the blade in his hand. He managed to stop it just as the killer tried to plunge it in his eye. Will's hands trembled as he gripped his arm. The blade inched closer to his eye. He moved his head away to let the knife stab the ground instead, and the blade nicked his cheekbone. It gave him the chance to seize power and pull the killer to the ground instead. Will pinned him to the ground and rained punches to his face before trying to pry the knife from him.

He would've succeeded if it wasn't for Jack's voice tearing through the woods.

"Will!"

Will looked up for a mere second, which was enough for the killer to grab a fallen branch nearby and bash his face with it. The impact threw Will off the man. Scrambling to his feet, the killer ran away.

Will groaned, gently clutching his face. He couldn't feel anything else except the pulsing pain coursing through it. It took some effort to get back on his feet. He nearly stumbled before regaining balance.

"You alright?" Jack called, running to him.

"Define alright. I almost had him."

"We'll get him."

Will doubted the killer would make the same mistake again. The next time wouldn't be easy.

***

Will lay in his bed, trying to get himself to calm down. Easier said than done when his nightmares ruined his sleep. One minute the clock on the nightstand showed twelve midnight, the next minute it showed four AM. In between this time jump, he had an extremely vivid nightmare about lying in bed in a pool of his own blood, while his severed limbs lay beside him. A dark figure in a hoodie towered over him, and he couldn't speak, like his mouth had been taped shut.

By the time he broke free of that nightmare and woke up with a start, he was cold, sweaty, and trembling all over. He had to change to a fresh white t-shirt and blue boxers.

So, there he was, tossing and turning, trying to at least get a few minutes of peace. The clock struck six AM.

Someone knocked on the door.

For God's sake.

He grumbled as he got out of bed and padded towards the door. Opening it, he squinted as the daylight stung his eyes. Hannibal stood there, wearing a brown trench coat, and a scarf, holding a bag.

A strange feeling crept into Will's stomach. He remembered the last thing he had said to him, and his fingers gripped the door a little tighter in nervous anticipation.

"Good morning, Will." Hannibal eyed the cut on his cheek which Will had nearly forgotten about. "What happened?"

"Nothing. Why are you here?"

"Because of that ultimatum you gave me. I made my choice."

Will's stomach fluttered for some reason, and his heart expanded in size. If this was happiness, he hadn't felt it in ages. Maybe it was relief, or surprise, or all three. After their last conversation, he hoped Hannibal would show up at his door. The possibility he wouldn't concerned him. He wouldn't know how to deal with it if Hannibal rejected him.

But there the doctor stood in front of him.

He chose Will Graham.

Will didn't know what to say or think. Only when Hannibal spoke did he realize he'd been silent for a bit too long.

"May I come in?" Hannibal asked.

Will snapped out of his reverie and was about to let him in, when someone else showed up in front of the house. He mentally sighed.

Alana.

"I figured at one point I'd find you two together." She clutched her handbag. "I knew I'd find you here, Hannibal. It's strange, though not surprising."

Smack in the middle of the two of them, Will felt incredibly awkward. Hannibal, on the other hand, showed no such signs of discomfort. Not outwardly, anyway.

"I came here to speak to Will," he said, coolly. "A session of sorts."

"At his house?"

"Private session."

Alana frowned. Will shifted restlessly, wishing this could end so he could go back inside the house. He didn't want to be there any longer.

"O-kay…" Alana said. "I don't suppose I could drop by at your place tonight."

Hannibal glanced at Will, who looked away, then back at her. “I’m afraid that won’t be possible.”

“I see.” She glanced down as if she expected that answer.

“It won’t be possible for us to meet anymore.”

She shook her head, a half-suppressed laugh escaped her mouth. “Wow. You know, I actually had my doubts when you were spending more time at the office with Will than you were at home. I suspected the second Will came back to therapy.”

“What we had was great, but we both know it wouldn’t be permanent. Besides, I don’t think I’m the right person for you to be with.”

Alana raised her brows. “And you just decided that on your own?”

“At some point, you’ll learn everything about me. When that time comes, trust me, you would want to be as far away from me as possible. It’s for your own good that we part ways early.”

Will listened to the conversation with intrigue now, unable to believe Hannibal was straight up breaking up with her in front of him. On the other hand, the disappointment on Alana’s face disappointed him too. He knew she would eventually find out about everything, anyway. She was smart.

She exhaled. “I can’t believe this.”

“It’s for the best. Saves you from further pain.” Hannibal gave Will a sidelong glance. “He is my priority.”

“Priority? Did you seriously say that about the man who almost tried to kill you?”

“Well, he didn’t. He had his reasons. We’ve moved past it.”

“Just like that, huh."

“We have a connection,” Will interjected. He didn’t know why he did.

“A unique one, too,” Hannibal added. “We might have had our differences and conflicts, but none of that matters anymore.”

Alana’s gaze darted between them before it tore away. She brushed the lengths of her hair back.

“I honestly struggle to understand the two of you,” she said, giving Hannibal a look. “What you have.”

“It’s not for everyone to understand,” Hannibal replied. “What we have is far beyond anyone’s ability to comprehend. It’s… special.”

She half-smiled. “Of course it is.”

Without another word, she walked away. Will caught the glint of emotion in her eyes before she left, and felt her heartbreak. More than that, he felt a tinge of guilt for having broken her heart. After all, it was partly because of him.

He went back into the house, and Hannibal followed. Closing the door behind him, Hannibal toed his shoes off and left them near the door. Will yanked open the curtains to let some sunlight into the dark home. He was living like a vampire. Outside, he saw Alana getting into her car and felt empathetic towards her. She had every right to be upset. He never thought he’d ever feel so strongly about Hannibal that he’d try to steal him from her. Everything that happened was simply beyond his comprehension.

What surprised him the most was how Hannibal had absolutely no qualms about ending their affair right there. He didn’t think twice. Then again, he did say he didn’t have any feelings for her in the first place.

Hannibal set the bag on the table. “I brought you some breakfast. Scrambled eggs and sausage.”

“Just like the first time you came to my house,” Will said.

“Yes.” Hannibal took out a bottle from the bag. “Also, I got you a better aftershave.”

Will hummed. His mind hadn’t moved on from what happened back there.

Hannibal kept the bottle on the table and looked at him. “Something’s bothering you."

Will held the chair. “I know I… wanted her out of this, but it doesn’t feel right.”

“Would you rather she stayed with me?”

“No… I don’t know.”

“Sometimes getting what you want doesn’t always feel right. This is what you wanted. Because the idea of sharing me with someone else pricks you like the spine of a cactus.”

“Are you here to mock me?”

“I’m simply telling the truth you wouldn’t.”

“Stop telling it. It isn’t a mystery when it’s clear as day.”

Hannibal went closer to him, eyeing his face again. “Who hurt you?”

“It’s no big deal.”

“It is for me.”

Will sighed. “The killer we’re hunting, James Pearson. We made a narrow escape. Like I said, no big deal.”

Hannibal brushed his thumb lightly across Will’s unharmed cheek. “The other day, you told me you wanted to know if what you felt was fleeting. Did you find your answer?”

“Not quite.” Will stared at him briefly before undoing his scarf and dropping it on the table. “Take off your clothes.”

Hannibal licked his lips at the bold request before taking off his coat, followed by his socks, his shirt, trousers, boxer briefs. He didn’t think twice about stripping naked in front of Will while the other watched. If anything, it clearly turned him on. He kept his gaze on Will as if to make sure the man didn't look away. And how could Will look away? His eyes roamed over Hannibal's robust physique, and he ran a hand across his taut chest. *Hannibal was beautiful*. Will never truly paid attention to him the first time, but now that he did, it captivated him.

In turn, his touch must've have evoked something in Hannibal too. It showed in the way his breath caught, his lips parted, and his pupils dilated.

“I can’t…” Will whispered, “Stay away from you.”

“Then don’t,” Hannibal murmured. “Stop resisting it. Let it flow through your veins.” His voice reduced further. “Your heart.”

Will slowly pulled his shirt off and dropped it to the floor. Taking Hannibal by the arm, he led him to the bed and the two of them lay down on it, with Will on top. The second Hannibal’s head touched the pillow, Will kissed him with a sudden passion, his teeth catching his bottom lip.

Hannibal caressed his warm body as though he was feeling it for the first time, sliding down till he reached the waistband of his boxers. He slipped a hand in and wrapped his fingers around his cock. Will broke the kiss and gasped as Hannibal steadily stroked him, feeling his cock fattening quickly in his hand. Will pushed his boxers down to his ankles, pulling them off. He kissed Hannibal’s chest, dragging his mouth down his body in a straight, wet line. Hannibal closed his eyes and let out a breath, ruffling Will’s curly hair as the other kissed his pelvis. Hannibal had always maintained his integrity in front of everyone, no matter what. Nobody could ever sway the man, and yet, all it took was Will’s caresses to break the wall he had built around himself.

Will fondled his body, watching him come undone in a way he had never seen before. He had never seen his face so euphoric. It made him wonder if it had been the same with Alana.

The thought made him uneasy.

He licked and sucked the length of Hannibal’s cock, feeling the grip on his hair tighten. He fisted his cock, rubbing his thumb over the pink tip, watching Hannibal’s mouth slacken. Drawing a white bead of pre-come, Will swiped his tongue over it to get a taste of him. He moved back up to kiss him. The kisses grew desperate when he moved to his neck. Will

nipped it, as if marking him. Making him his. He wanted to remove every imprint, every memory of Alana from Hannibal's body and mind. He didn't care if it seemed selfish.

In all his darkness, Hannibal Lecter belonged to him.

Will straddled him. Hannibal's hands skimmed up his ribs, his thumbs playing with his nipples. Will lifted his hips and positioned himself over Hannibal's cock. A tempting moan ripped from his throat as he lowered himself, taking the thick length in. He shifted side to side until he had taken Hannibal to the root, until his cock had stretched him wide open and filled him too full.

"Hannibal." He rode him, bracing a hand on his chest.

He felt Hannibal's cock move inside him, felt the hard flesh stroking his sensitive tissues, the tip pushing further in each time. It was too much and not enough at the same time. Will wanted to feel the pleasure in his bones. He glanced down at the man under him who stared back at him as if Will was some beautiful sculpture. Hannibal heaved heavy breaths through his half-open mouth, digging his fingers into Will's hips. Will dropped his head back and closed his eyes, groaning as he felt every tiny sensation in his hypersensitive nerves. Heat rose up his spine like a spark along the wick of a dynamite, spreading through his cells, veins, and arteries and rushing down to the length of his cock. His cock had already begun leaking, leaving a white trail on Hannibal's stomach.

Hannibal groped his body shamelessly, making him burn all over. Will loved every second of it. He never wanted him to stop touching him.

However, Hannibal wanted more. He wanted to take over. He sat up and snaked an arm around Will's body, bringing him down on the bed with a bounce. Will gasped, barely getting to take a breath when Hannibal clasped his hip with his free hand and tugged it sharply towards him, thrusting harder.

Will craned his neck up. "Ahhh!"

Hannibal sunk his teeth into his shoulder, slamming into him. Will raked his fingernails down his back, hearing him growl. All Will could feel was the throbbing ache in his shaft and the friction of Hannibal's cock nailing him relentlessly. So much that the bed creaked. Heavy breaths soughed from his lungs as Hannibal kissed and licked his neck, moving along his throat to the other side. Will threaded his fingers in his salt and pepper hair, feeling the wetness on his skin wherever Hannibal's lips trailed.

This intimacy blazed with a feral passion, the result of months and months of pent-up desire and longing. *Just how long had Hannibal felt this way about Will? How long had he dreamt about him, filled the pages of his books with drawings of him?* The Cannibal, the Ripper, or whatever he was called, was in love with him. It boggled Will to know that was even possible for a person like him.

After that, it was impossible for Will to not feel the same. He couldn't hold back anymore.

He mashed his lips into Hannibal's, whimpering in his mouth. Hannibal's body felt hot, burning like a furnace. Will's cock was pressed against his stomach, stimulated by the pressure. Hannibal's lips moved against his, their foreheads touching.

"I want it," Will groaned. "I want to feel you."

Hannibal raised his head, teeth clenching as he came. Will sunk his head back into the pillow, feeling the hot spurt flowing thickly inside him. A loud cry ripped from his throat and he jetted a sticky trail on himself, coating his stomach. Hannibal watched him lose control, matching the expressions on his face.

Will fell lax. He heard the soft smack of Hannibal's lips as they kissed his throat. He closed his eyes for a moment and swallowed, trying to get his brain to stop swirling, because he could never confute the fact this felt undeniably good. When Hannibal pulled out of him, his body took time to adjust to the strange emptiness.

He opened his eyes to meet Hannibal's brown ones, reaching a hand up to feel his face. Strands of Hannibal's hair dangled loose, his thin lips parted, hot breaths fanning over Will's face. The room was illuminated by whatever daylight came in from the windows, casting shadows in other places. Those shadows played on Hannibal's face, highlighting his cheekbones. The man looked beautifully and darkly erotic, yet at the same time, his eyes still had a glimmer of impassioned love. Who knew a serial killer could possess the capability of being tender and intimate?

"Did it feel good doing this with Alana?" Will asked.

"Feelings don't come into the picture," Hannibal replied.

Will paused. "Do you really love me?"

It might be a foolish question, but that wasn't the point of asking it. Despite knowing the obvious answer, he still wanted to hear it from him.

"Madly." Hannibal must've sensed that he needed it.

"Why me?"

"Because you're special. Radiant. Most of all, I see myself in you. You have evoked feelings in me I never thought I would feel for anyone. Our worlds share similarities with each other. Nobody would ever understand us better than we do each other."

Will smiled slightly, gently pulling him into a tender kiss.

"Breakfast's going to get cold," said Hannibal.

"Yeah," Will said.

Hannibal pressed a kiss to his forehead and his cheek before moving off him and the bed. Will eyed his ass while Hannibal went to grab some tissues. He came back and handed some to Will, while using the rest to clean himself.

“Actually, I’ll take a shower first. I‘m kind of sweaty,” Will said, walking to the bathroom. He glanced back. “Will you join me?”

The smile that appeared on Hannibal’s face said, *‘How can I refuse?’*

…

Will swept back Hannibal’s hair as the hot water sliced between them. Hannibal firmly clasped Will’s ass, giving it a squeeze. Holding his arms, he turned him around to face the glass enclosure. With his palms to the glass, Will pillowed his head on Hannibal’s strong shoulder while the other sucked his neck. Even after having made love minutes ago, they couldn’t get enough of each other.

Will couldn’t get enough.

Hannibal stroked his pecs, grinding his cock against his ass. Will turned to kiss him, their lips tugging at each other. Skin to skin, every inch of their flesh rubbed sensually against each other. Enough to drive them out of their minds.

Then again, in that moment, they weren’t even using their heads in the first place. They weren’t thinking.

Just feeling.

Deeply.

Intimately.

***

“It’s delicious,” Will said, chewing on a piece of sausage.

Hannibal bowed his head in response. It was always a pleasure to cook for Will Graham. Taking a thermos flask and two paper cups from the bag, he poured some coffee in them. He gave a sidelong glance at the bruises on Will’s cheek, feeling a prick of malice for whoever hurt him.

“This killer—”

“James Pearson,” Will replied.

“Yes. How are you planning to find him?”

“I’m working on it. I have a feeling he’s going to return to Brad’s home.”

“To tie off the loose end.”

“Yeah.” Will took a sip of the coffee. “He also most likely knows we’d expect that.”

“His only alternative would be to take Brad Wesley somewhere else, by kidnapping him.”

Will leaned back in his seat. “That would be what I’d do if I were in his shoes. I’d have to be quick about it and pick a time with the least probability of getting caught.”

“I’m assuming Mr. Wesley is under witness protection?”

“Yeah. The FBI are keeping watch.”

“Are there blind spots around his mansion?”

“I didn’t get a proper look, but his house is surrounded by woods so I’m guessing there are plenty of blind spots. James is dangerous. I got proof of that when he almost tried to kill me. I know for a fact he’ll return to that house.”

“Do you have a plan to stop him?”

Will leaned forward, forking some scrambled eggs into his mouth. “I’m working on it.”

“Just be careful.”

Will smirked. “Concerned about me?”

Obviously. “Shouldn’t I be? You said so yourself. Jack is dangerous.”

Will’s smile dropped and he glanced down at the breakfast. Hannibal looked at the dark curls falling down his forehead, the trimmed stubble on his face, the lips he loved kissing so much. He wished to run his fingers through those soft curls, brush them away from his face and kiss his forehead. Will was stunning in every way. Hannibal’s elation knew no bounds, knowing Will finally surrendered to his feelings, so there was no way he’d want him to get hurt.

Of course he was concerned about Will. He didn’t want to lose the love he fought so hard for.

“I do wonder what Alana must be thinking right now,” Will said. “She was your necessity. Aren’t you worried you lost the advantage?”

“Not when I have you. Besides, I’m more worried about losing you.”

Hannibal didn’t look at him when he said that but he sensed Will’s gaze on him. Even for someone as audacious as him, some things were hard to say. He took a sip of coffee before finally looking at him to find him still staring.

“I’ll be okay,” Will said. “It’s you who should watch yourself. Jack has started to suspect you.”

“I know.”

Hannibal expected it. It was as Will had said before in his office, it was only a matter of time before Jack would be onto him. He had a plan, of course. He always did whenever he needed to get out of a mess, but he wondered if Will would join him in his plan. He wondered if he would take a chance with him.

They ate the rest of the breakfast in silence. The silence wasn't uncomfortable in the least. They'd grown so used to each other's company, they didn't require conversations.

***

That evening, hours after Hannibal had left, Will heard his dogs barking near the door. He opened the door to find a package at his doorstep, with his name scribbled in messy letters on the brown packaging. He recognized the handwriting immediately. It was the same one used on all the other packages sent to the families of the butchered victims. He picked it up, tearing open the wrapping to find a wooden box. Inside, was a bloody severed hand and a wristwatch that looked familiar to Will.

It was Brad Wesley's watch.

There was also a note, with blood staining the corners.

'You and me, Mr. Graham. 12th Street. Winner gets the prize'

An invitation from the killer. Will had a hunch that Brad was still alive. What other prize could James be talking about? If Will chose not to go, then Brad would definitely die. Not only that, the killer might disappear for good. He had no choice. This time though, he would be prepared. He took his 9mm from a drawer and checked the rounds before stuffing it in his waistband, concealed by his jacket. He assumed the FBI would still be there at Brad's house, but his house wasn't at 12th Street.

James was leading him somewhere else. Assuming he had kidnapped Brad, Will was curious how he managed to get Brad out of his house unnoticed.

Looked like he was about to find out.

As Will sat in his car, he contemplated about calling Hannibal. Their relationship had changed, and they grown close, but he still couldn't tell where they stood. He wondered if calling him would be of any use. While his mind weighed on the idea, his hands—as if controlled by his heart—had already taken his phone out and called him.

"Twelfth street," he said through the phone. "James Pearson's waiting for me. I have to go alone."

There was silence on the other end. He cut the call without giving Hannibal a chance to respond. He knew the man heard him, so now it remained to be seen if he would come to the location.

If he could care enough.

***

Will pulled his car over near a contemporary mansion. It was large, grey, and intimidating, like some concrete creature resting in the midst of a vast open area. He went out and walked towards the building, pulling his gun out and turning the safety off. The door was

unsurprisingly unlocked, the keypad next to it smashed. He made his way into an empty foyer with marble floors, dimly lit by warm ambient lighting. The silence was unsettling. He took a glance at the living room before heading to the stairs. Raising his gun up, he crept upstairs, trying to make the least noise. The last thing he wanted was to be taken by surprise. He came up to a cozy family room, also dimly lit, with sofas and a wall-mounted TV opposite. His gun lowered a bit when he found Brad there, tied to a chair. His head lay limply to the side, blood streaming down his face. Duct tape sealed his mouth.

Will didn't notice James looming in a dark corner until the man showed himself, with a gun in his hand.

"Good, you're here," he said.

Will snapped his gun at him, and so did James.

"Easy now," James smirked. "Wouldn't want to ruin the night so soon."

With his reddish brown hair combed back, dressed in a black figure-hugging jacket, jeans and boots, the man looked like he was about to pull off a heist. Will hadn't gotten a good look at him before, in the dark woods. Now he did.

"Our last encounter was left unfinished," James said. "I always make it a point to know my enemies, and you, Mr. Graham, were an absolute surprise. I didn't think the FBI would have someone like you. Of course, I couldn't stop myself from finding out who you were."

"Is he alive?" Will asked, giving Brad a sidelong glance.

"Barely. His survival depends on how fast he reaches a hospital, and whether you can survive soon enough to call an ambulance."

Will noticed the bloody stump of Brad's wrist where his hand had been severed. A small pool of blood had soaked the beige rug.

"I'm curious as to how you got past the FBI," Will said.

"That took some work," James replied. "Set up a kidnapping of a young woman and informed the FBI. If they didn't show up to save her in time, I was going to kill her. Most of the FBI responded, including that friend of yours, two of them stayed behind at the house but they weren't a big deal. It was easy getting past them."

"Let me guess. You already murdered that woman long before they got there."

"Exactly. Gave me enough time to drag Mr. Wesley here. This is his second house, you know? The filthy rich can get away with anything. Even murder."

"Brad's selfishness murdered your sister."

James' eyes darkened. "He'll pay for that. Not before I deal with you first. You've gotten in my way once. It's not happening again. But… guns are too quick. Why don't we settle this the way we should have in the woods?"

“It wasn’t a fair fight, if I recall. I didn’t have the advantage of a knife then.”

“Neither will I this time.” James raised his hands up, then slowly proceeded to place his gun on the ground. “Come on.”

Will stole a glimpse of a vase on the coffee table nearby, just within his reach, and slowly lowered his gun too. The two of them placed their weapons on the ground at the same time.

The second Will’s gun touched the ground, he grabbed the vase and flung it towards him. James snapped his arm up to shield himself, and the vase broke on impact. It was merely a distraction, though, because in that split-second he dropped his guard, Will was already sprinting towards him. He pounced on him and knocked him to the floor, knocking a heavy book off another small table in the process.

Will punched James across the face before gripping his neck, squeezing the life out of him. James scrambled for purchase, trying to grab the book nearby. He found it and picked it up, bashing Will’s face with it. Will fell to the ground next to him. James snarled, yanking him up by his collar and throwing an uppercut up his jaw. Will felt the pain shooting through his jaw, teeth, and gums. He dreaded he might’ve broken a tooth. He forced himself to recover quickly enough to snap his hips up and throw James off him.

The two of them got to their feet in a second, both aiming daggers at each other, both with an intent to kill. James suddenly tried to punch him, looping overhand right. Will pivoted towards the incoming punch, slamming his elbow into the side of James’ face. Turning to him, he followed it up by grabbing James' collar and tugging him down to knee him in the stomach twice. The attack must’ve painfully winded James, and yet, he still managed to block Will’s next punch. Will threw his head forward, connecting with James’ nose, like the latter had done to him back in the woods. The headbutt stunned James for a moment. Will seized the opportunity to land a massive kick to the middle of his body, sending him falling backwards, smashing into the coffee table. It broke into two and its wooden legs snapped.

James groaned. Will refused to give him a breather. He strode over to him and kicked his ribs over and over, making him writhe in pain. James grabbed one of the broken wooden legs of the coffee table and hit him on the calf. Will grunted and stumbled back. James picked himself up like the tenacious psychopath he was and lunged at him. Will snapped his arms up in time defend himself as the killer tried to smash Will on the head with the wooden leg, but hit his arms again instead.

Still, getting hit by a large piece of heavy wood hurt like a bugger. The wooden leg broke in half. James dropped the broken piece and charged towards Will like a bull, with his head bowed forward and his arms out. He hooked his arms around Will’s waist, driving him backwards to the balcony. They smashed through the glass, and Will’s back hit the metal railing. With a sudden show of strength, James tried to throw him over the railing. He almost succeeded, had Will not clung onto him. In the effort to overpower each other and throw the other over the railing, both of them fell over. Plunging from the second floor to the large swimming pool in the backyard below.

Even after taking a dive, both men refused to let go of each other. Their grips slipped for a split-second before Will grabbed hold of James again, jaw clenching as he punched him

across the face. His chest tightened, and he tried to preserve whatever oxygen he had. Unfortunately, James delivering a punch to his gut knocked a bit of that oxygen out of Will's lungs. Bubbles escaped Will's mouth before he mashed his lips together. Both of them now fought to drown the other.

James hooked an arm around Will's neck from behind, squeezing with all his might. Will thrashed and kicked, trying to elbow him in the face. James leaned his head to the side to evade the blow, refusing to loosen his grip. At this point, Will's lungs burned, craving for air, and his insides felt as if they would explode. He fought harder, elbowing James in the ribs and on his face. Despite the pain from those attacks, James held on.

Will glanced up at the surface of the water. It seemed to be further and further away from him, the glint of light peering through it began to dim. His arms and legs stopped responding to him and acted of their own accord, holding him prisoner in his own body while the light-headedness took over. His vision began to spot.

They say your life flashes before your eyes, but all Will could think of in that moment was Hannibal's face. The prospect of never seeing him again submerged him in the depths of regret just like the pool of water around him.

He'll never get the chance to talk to him again.

Hold him. Feel him. Kiss him again.

Tell him the words he should've said a long time ago.

It hurt like hell and Will couldn't tell if it was emotional pain or the lack of oxygen. Everything grew dark, like he was in a long tunnel and the light on the other end was dimming. He thought he felt a jerk, some kind of movement behind him, but he had blacked out by then.

***

The second Hannibal received Will's call, he had rushed out of his house and into his car, driving to the location as fast he could. A sudden sense of foreboding had taken over him. He tried Will's phone while in the car only for it to go straight into voicemail. It worsened his apprehension.

Reaching 12th Street, he pulled over near the mansion, scrambling out of the car and into the house. Barging in, he went into the living room before his sights fell on the full-length windows looking out into the backyard, spotting movement in the swimming pool. He ran out the back door, coming out to see two figures under the surface of the water. One of them was Will.

Hannibal saw shards of glass scattered near the pool and glanced up, quickly figuring out that they had fallen from the balcony above.

He whipped his jacket off, flinging it aside, and diving into the pool without a second thought. He grabbed James' head, yanking it to the side and slamming it to the wall of the

pool. The second James let go of Will, Hannibal bound a sturdy arm around neck and yanked him out of the water. He could've drowned him the way James did to Will, but that was too quick a death for the son of a bitch.

Hannibal dragged the man out of the water. James was still stunned by the impact to his head, too disoriented to act. He helplessly tried to catch Hannibal's arm. As Lecter threw him onto the ground, James caught a glimpse of the dark, demonic face glaring at him, the glint of deathly rage in its eyes.

Provoking Hannibal Lecter was like summoning Satan. The last thing anyone should ever do. And the one thing that provoked him like nothing else was any attempt to hurt Will.

Nobody hurts Will Graham.

With that hellish fury blazing in him, Hannibal picked the biggest shard of glass he could find and plunged it to the side of James' neck, watching the dark blood spewing out. Pooling under his head. James choked and spluttered, eyes bulging wide. Hannibal used the shard to slice his neck across, almost decapitating him. He wasn't done yet, but he had to stop because of Will. He'd finish the job afterwards.

He glanced at the pool to see Will's lifeless form floating underwater. The burst of hot anger he felt was quickly replaced by a chilling fear. Scrambling to his feet, he dived back into the pool again and swam towards Will. He got a firm grip on his body before swimming up. As they breached the surface, he whipped his head and gasped. He tugged Will along as he swam to the stairs of the pool before dragging him onto the bank. He removed Will's drenched jacket and threw it aside before laying him flat on the ground, unbuttoning his shirt and flinging it wide open.

It was the first time Hannibal ever had to force his emotions down and keep his brain focused. He never had to make an effort before since he usually knew how to keep his emotions in check. However, around Will, his functioning always went awry. His heart would be thrown into disarray, clouding his cerebral ability. Even now, fear loomed over him like a dark figure, and he consciously had to ignore it in order to save Will. The fear served no purpose other than trying to convince him Will was gone.

Plugging Will's nose, Hannibal opened his mouth and sealed it with his, giving him two rescue breaths before moving to chest compressions. He interwined his hands together, placing them on the center of Will's sternum and pushing down, counting mentally as he did.

"Will. Come back to me."

Will trusted him when he made that phone call, informing him of his location. If Hannibal failed to save him, he knew he would never forgive himself.

"Darling, I need you to breathe," he said, voice almost cracking. "Right now. Breathe for me."

His heart wrenched as his lips met Will's cold, wet ones again, and the memory of kissing him in his house flashed in his mind. The time when Will was safe in his arms and his lips

were soft and warm. Hannibal vividly remembered brushing those soft curls of his back as they lay in bed, staring at each other. That was how it was supposed to be.

Not this.

He hated this.

He hated how cold Will felt. How lifeless he lay. He hated that their lips met this way. He was willing to give every last breath in his body to save him if that was what it took.

He breathed into his mouth before resuming the compressions, his desperation growing by the second.

“Don’t go.” His gaze flitted between his hands on Will’s bare chest and his face. His heart hammered in his rib cage. “Don’t go where I can’t follow.”

Some part of Will had to hear him. He couldn’t just ignore him.

The anguish reflected in Hannibal’s voice when it rose. He didn’t bother holding it back anymore. Nor did he stop the tears from flooding his eyes.

“Will!” He went back to his mouth to give him air, then pulled back to see his face. “Breathe for me, please. I need you to breathe. I need you back.”

Hannibal couldn’t tell the difference between his tears and the water dripping from his face. His hands tirelessly and steadily pressed down on Will’s chest, refusing to give up.

He noticed movement, and stopped the compressions.

Will’s body suddenly jerked and he threw up. Hannibal held him for support as Will rolled to his side, water spewing from his mouth. He coughed and gasped.

“That’s it,” Hannibal exhaled in relief. “Breathe.”

Will glanced around, dazed and confused. Hannibal pulled his shirt close and gently took him into his arms. Will’s gaze came to focus on him, his chest heaving with labored breaths.

“H-Hannibal…” he gasped.

“I’m here,” Hannibal replied, caressing the side of his face.

“You… came for me.”

“Of course I did.”

Will shut his eyes for a moment. “W-what took you so long?”

Hannibal smiled slightly, a tear rolling down his nose. “Sorry to keep you waiting.”

Cradling Will’s face in his hand, he leaned down and kissed his wet lips.

“I’m here, darling,” Hannibal said. “You’ll be alright. I’ll take care of you.”

Will exhaled a long breath, his body relaxing in Hannibal’s embrace. His heavy-lidded eyes closed from the weakness and his face fell towards Hannibal’s chest. Hannibal lay him on the ground for a moment so he could grab the coat he’d thrown nearby. He went back with it, cradled Will in his arms again, and wrapped the coat warm and snug around him, then carried him in his arms. He took a glance at James, lying in a pool of his own blood, which had spread out to the pool and tainted the water.

Hannibal went inside the house, which was comparatively warmer than the outdoors, to the living room, where he placed Will on a sofa for a while.

“I’ll be back in a moment,” he said.

He strode into the kitchen, selecting the biggest knife from the rack there. He found a blank post-it note and a sharpie near the fridge and grabbed them before going back out into the pool. There was no way he’d leave without finishing the job. Harming Will was the last thing James did in his pathetic life, and Hannibal wanted him to meet the same fate as his victims, even after death.

Lecter’s jaw tightened and his eyes darkened as he chopped through James’ limbs, the blood soaking the knife and his hands. With the same lack of finesse that James had when he cut his victims, Hannibal severed all four of his limbs and completely decapitated his head for good measure. Then dumped the severed parts into the pool. He placed the post-it note on James chest, and wrote a message on it for Jack.

‘Tied off the loose end’

He entered the house again, hearing the sirens of approaching ambulances. He quickly washed and wiped the knife before placing it in the rack.

Will muttered something when Hannibal went back to him.

“I’m right here,” he said.

“Brad…” Will whispered. “Upstairs…”

“The paramedics will deal with him.”

Hannibal carried him in his arms again, heading out the front door.

***

Will opened his eyes to find himself in a large, spacious bedroom, warm under the comforter. He’d recognize the wooden paneled walls with the deep peacock blue accents—which matched the comforter—and the fireplace anywhere. He just never thought he’d see it again. The last time he had been here was on one of his visits to Hannibal’s house, where he had come to check out the bedroom for a few minutes.

He glanced down to find himself clothed in a clean, dry white shirt, and black plaid pajamas.

Hannibal entered the room, dressed in a pristine white shirt—the top two buttons of which were left open—and dark grey trousers. He held a mug, smiling as he came to Will.

“Good morning,” he said. “How do you feel?”

Will groaned as he tried to sit up, his body heavy and stiff from lack of use. “Like an elephant’s sitting on top of me.”

“It was a close call. Here.” Hannibal handed him the mug, filled with steaming black coffee.

“Thanks.”

Hannibal adjusted the pillows so Will could comfortably sit back, then sat by his side on the bed. Will leaned his head back against the headboard, smiling warmly back at him.

“I suppose I should thank you for saving me,” he said.

“It’s not necessary,” Hannibal replied.

“To be honest, I didn’t expect you to come.”

“Why?”

Will glanced down at the coffee. “I don’t know. I guess I was wondering… what I meant to you.”

“Everything.”

There wasn’t the tiniest bit of hesitation in that response. Will looked up at him. They were way past their differences that the closeness between them felt comfortable, though Will had been uncertain as to how deep Hannibal’s feelings went. Maybe he never expected the man to come rushing to rescue. Hearing him say that Will was his *everything* was uncharacteristic of the man he was. In fact, Hannibal had been surprising Will a lot lately in that aspect, saying things he never expected. He couldn’t complain. At this point, he’d already forgotten about their conflicts. The bliss of falling in love had overpowered everything else.

He felt weightless. Warmth seeped into the pores of his skin and radiated throughout his body.

Happiness. That’s what it was.

He got a second chance at life because of Hannibal and he intended to make the most of it, starting with a confession that was long overdue.

He leaned forward and kissed him. He felt Hannibal push back, his thin lips merging with Will’s, gently tugging them. Hannibal’s fingers brushed along Will’s jawline, soft against his stubble, running up to his cheeks and lingering there while they kissed.

Will pulled his lips away just enough to say, “I love you.”

Hannibal inched back, amber eyes full of surprise.

“I love you too, Will.”

Will smiled and rested back on the bed again, taking a sip of the coffee. “What happened to James?”

“I took care of it,” Hannibal replied.

“Brad?”

“He had a narrow escape.”

Will knew he would take care of the killer. Now that James was out of the way, he knew Jack’s attention would revert to the Chesapeake Ripper. The suspicions on Hannibal were strong, and questioning Bedelia about Lecter only added fuel to the fire. In the hatred he felt before, Will wanted Hannibal to get caught. He never thought those feelings would take a drastic turn. When he had tried implicitly convincing Jack that Hannibal was the Ripper, nobody believed him. But now, everyone suspected Hannibal, and Will didn’t want them to get to him.

How the tables had turned.

“What’re you going to do about Jack?” Will asked.

Hannibal dropped his gaze. “That depends. You once wished that I be caught.”

“Once. I changed my mind.”

“Jack hasn’t changed his. If push comes to shove, I might have to kill him.”

“If you don’t have a choice.”

“It doesn’t bother you that I might kill your friend?”

“He was your friend too. He wants justice. He’s not willing to forgive anyone.”

There was a long pause.

“... Maybe we could leave everything and run away together,” said Hannibal.

Another pause followed. Will had never thought about leaving his job and his life behind. He was used to them. His job was the one thing he knew best and he never considered leaving it for good. He most certainly never imagined leaving it all for Hannibal. It was a huge decision that had no possibility of turning back. If Will ran away, that was it.

While his mind contemplated on the consequences of running away and every possible scenario that might follow, his heart was already considering it. His feelings for Hannibal made it hard to decide. He wouldn’t have had a problem if he still hated the man. However,

the undeniable reality was that Will had fallen in love with him. He wanted to be with him, no matter the ramifications.

“Maybe,” he said. “We’ll just have to wait and see.”

Will took another sip of the coffee, but couldn’t focus on its taste anymore. A clock ticked away in his mind, as if counting down to an end.

An end neither of them could foresee.

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“Are you willing to do what it takes?” Jack asked.

Across the desk from him, Will sat, his face unreadable but his thoughts in turmoil. Everything was happening too fast for him to catch up, to think it over. His friend asking him to kill the man he loved put him in a dilemma he didn’t want to be in. Jack’s stern gaze showed conviction and a clear goal. He knew what he wanted.

Will, on the other hand, dreaded where this might end up. Whatever answer he gave here had its own consequences.

“Yes,” he replied, unable to tell the truth. A prick of guilt seized his heart knowing he might be betraying Jack.

“Good,” Jack said. “Hannibal thinks you’re his man in the room. Best to keep it that way.”

Will gripped the armrests a little tighter before getting up and walking out of the office.

Shit. What has he gotten himself into?

Hannibal was right. It would’ve been better to just disappear. Nothing said and done.

Now things had become too complicated.

Despite Will’s predicament, he had ended up calling Hannibal’s phone after he left FBI headquarters to say two words he knew he’d understand.

“They know.”

Again, he didn’t wait for a response before ending the call.

Now, sitting in his car hours later, dread churned in the pit of his stomach as he drove to Hannibal’s house in the rainy night, the lingering aura of fear sitting right next to him in the passenger seat like some sort of uninvited guest. Staring at him through ghostly eyes. He kept securing a grip on the steering wheel, as if he was about to lose control of the vehicle. The roads shimmered with rainwater, the heavy drops pattering against his windshield. The

wipers worked incessantly to clear the view. Will tried to focus on the road, lest he actually lost control.

He finally reached the large house, which stood there like a menacing, haunted structure. He couldn't discern anything in the darkness except for the light coming from the windows. Pulling over near the curb, he stepped out, pulling his trench coat snug as he hurried to the house.

It was only then he saw someone lying on the ground in front of the door. Again, he couldn't discern who it was until he approached. His lips fell open when he realized it was Alana, lying there, bleeding. He rushed to her, taking his coat off and draping it over her like a blanket. He fumbled with his pocket, taking out his phone with shaky hands and calling for an ambulance.

"Jack's in there…" she choked, blood streaming from her mouth.

The fear now gripped Will's shoulders. A chill ran down his spine which definitely wasn't because of the rain. He didn't know if he would like what he found when he went into the house.

Taking his gun out, he went in. An eerie emptiness welcomed him into the hallway. The door to the dining room was open, and he could hear nothing aside from the muffled sound of rain and the occasional clap of thunder. He cautiously crept into the kitchen. The first thing that caught his eye was the dark red pool flowing out from under the door of the pantry, which he couldn't tell if it was blood or wine. He peered closely at it but didn't get a second to examine it before he sensed a presence to his left.

He glanced left and saw Hannibal, face bleeding, and white shirt stained with crimson. A bloody knife in his hand. Will had no idea what he hoped, but it certainly wasn't finding Hannibal still in the house after warning him of Jack's arrival.

"You were supposed to leave," Will spoke through clenched teeth, lowering his gun to his side and walking closer to him.

Hannibal's features softened when he looked at Will, as they always did.

"I couldn't leave without you," he said.

He exhaled a slow breath, placing a hand on the side of Will's face, stroking the wet curls that stuck to his ear.

"How *could* I leave without you?" he whispered.

Will closed his eyes, leaning into his palm. In what little time there remained, he knew one of them had to stay back and stall the FBI when they came while the other escaped. And it certainly wasn't going to be Hannibal. Will's heart had already decided long before his mind came to terms with it. He loved Hannibal too much to let the cops get a hold of him.

He also knew this might be the last time he would see him.

His lips trembled, his eyes misting over. He took Hannibal's hand off his face and stepped back.

"Go," he said. "The cops will be here soon. I'll buy you some time."

Hannibal didn't budge.

"Go!" Will said louder, voice breaking. "Right now."

"I'm not leaving you," Hannibal said.

"We don't have time for this. Get out of here."

"Then come with me."

"I… I can't. It's too late."

"No, it isn't. We can figure it out."

Will heard the faintest wail of sirens. His jaw clenched with agitation. "Get. Out of here."

"I told you, I won't leave you. I almost lost you once. I won't risk it again." Hannibal moved closer to him, dropping the knife and holding his face. "You've been living a lie for so long. You told me nobody understood you like I did. Tell me you never considered staying with me. Haven't you wished to get away from all this?"

Will exhaled a shuddering breath, tears rolling down his cheek. "Hannibal…"

"Run away with me. We'll go somewhere together."

The sirens grew louder, the clock in Will's mind ticked faster. *Make a choice*.

There were a lot of choices, but only one he really wanted.

He nodded.

Hannibal let out a quiet sigh, and a single tear from his eye. "Let's go."

Will tucked his gun in his waistband at the back as the two of them ran out of the house. He shot a glance at the pantry. He didn't get a chance to check on Jack, but knowing him, Will believed he would survive.

Outside, Will stopped near the entrance while Hannibal went out into the road, glancing down at Alana. No matter what petty disagreements they might've had, Will never wanted her to get hurt.

He knelt beside her. "You'll be alright. Help will be here soon."

Alana looked at him in disbelief. He wished he had the time to explain everything to her, but then again, he might never be able to make her understand. Running away with the cannibal

wouldn't make sense to anyone, especially to her. To her, it was betrayal, and naturally so. Will wouldn't blame her if she felt that way.

"I'm sorry," he said.

Sirens got louder as they approached closer. The paramedics would take care of her. He didn't like leaving her there, though.

"Will!" Hannibal called. "We have to go! It's now or never!"

Will took a last look at Alana before standing and hurrying towards Hannibal. The two of them ran away from the place just as the police and ambulances arrived. They had no time to take Will's car. Cold and drenched from the rain, their fingers went numb and their legs ached. They took a left and headed down a dark street, running until they were far away from the scene.

Will caught Hannibal's arm and stopped. "Wait! W-where do we go?"

"I have that figured out," Hannibal replied. "Don't worry."

It was a huge risk, leaving everything behind so suddenly. Will thought of his home, his dogs, his job. He was unprepared.

"I…"

"There's no time for second thoughts, Will," Hannibal said. "We can drop by your house. Feed your dogs, grab whatever you can." He came closer. "It's your choice to make. You can choose to go back now if you wish, but you would never be free. You would never be content."

He was right. There was no going back to his life. Things were different now. Besides, Will wasn't sure if he *could* go back to a life without Hannibal in it.

"All I wanted was for us to be together," Hannibal said. "Some part of you must want that too."

Some would be an understatement. Every fiber of Will's being yearned to be with Hannibal. He grabbed Hannibal's shirt collar and yanked him close, crushing their lips together. As Hannibal clutched his arm, Will's hands left Hannibal's collar, ran up his neck and rested just below his ears. He felt every bit of his affection being reciprocated simply by the way Hannibal kissed him or held him so close their bodies touched.

"I do," Will said. "You're all I need."

Hannibal parted lips curved up into the slightest of smiles, his nose brushing against Will's.

"It's settled then," he said.

They left the place together. By the time the FBI would figure out what went down, Hannibal and Will would be long gone.

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Hannibal leaned back into his seat, deeply inhaling the cabin air. He opened his eyes and glanced left at the oval window to see a vast expanse of white clouds and couldn't help smiling at the feeling of tranquility it gave.

But nothing felt more peaceful than seeing his beloved sitting right next to him. Will's gaze was fixed on the clouds too, the sunlight bathing his skin in a golden glow and turning his crisp blue eyes green. Hannibal smiled, truly smiled, because this had to be what bliss meant.

Will looked at him. "I've never flown in a long time. At least, not to another country."

"A new experience to welcome a fresh start," Hannibal said.

"I'm curious to see what Florence is like after everything you told me."

"I'd be happy to show you."

Hannibal held his hand and brought it to his lips, placing a kiss on his fingers, smelling his skin in the process because Will always smelled so sweet. He also caught a whiff of a sensual cologne from Will's suit, which was familiar to him because it was *his* cologne. The suit, shirt and trouser ensemble Will wore also belonged to Hannibal. Not that Will didn't pack his own stuff, he just liked wearing Hannibal's clothes.

And Hannibal couldn't have loved it more.

Leaving everything behind did bring a melancholic feeling to Will, but at some point, he knew this would happen. The more he tried to get away from Hannibal, he only got that much closer to him. Even if he had the chance at a better life, it wouldn't be better without Hannibal.

Neither of them spoke much for the duration of the flight.

It was just quiet smiles, little gestures of affection like holding hands and leaning on the other's shoulder that spoke more than they could ever put into words.

End Notes

Hope you liked this mess :)

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